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The Mexico Newsletter

August 1994

Security Issues

The government has stepped up efforts to negotiate with the rebels in Chiapas. The EZLN, meanwhile, has called for a national convention to address social problems facing Mexico and has reiterated its commitment to finding peace. Nevertheless, isolated armed clashes in Chiapas and other states--notably Guerrero and Oaxaca--are on the rise.

Salinas has also initiated two legislative bills that would increase the penalties for crimes involving the possession of arms, organized crime, and drug trafficking. According to press reports, possession of firearms normally carried by the armed forces, previously a minor infraction, would become a serious crime--roughly equivalent to a felony under US statutes--and release from custody on bail would be proscribed. (CNF)

The EZLN is planning to hold a national convention from 6 to 9 August in Chiapas to address the social and political problems that face Mexico. According to press reports, discussion points include: the peaceful transition to democracy, the inviolability of the state party system, civil resistance, defense of the vote, and outlining a national development strategy. Moreover, the rebels have decided to draw up a "civil disobedience plan" to defend the "will of the people" whenever necessary. Delegates to the convention will come from various citizen's groups but must be approved by an organizational commission; so far, 90 rural and civic organizations have agreed to attend.

Clashes between armed groups and government security agencies are on the rise. Approximately 1,000 peasants confronted local officials and briefly kidnapped a town mayor in Chiapas in

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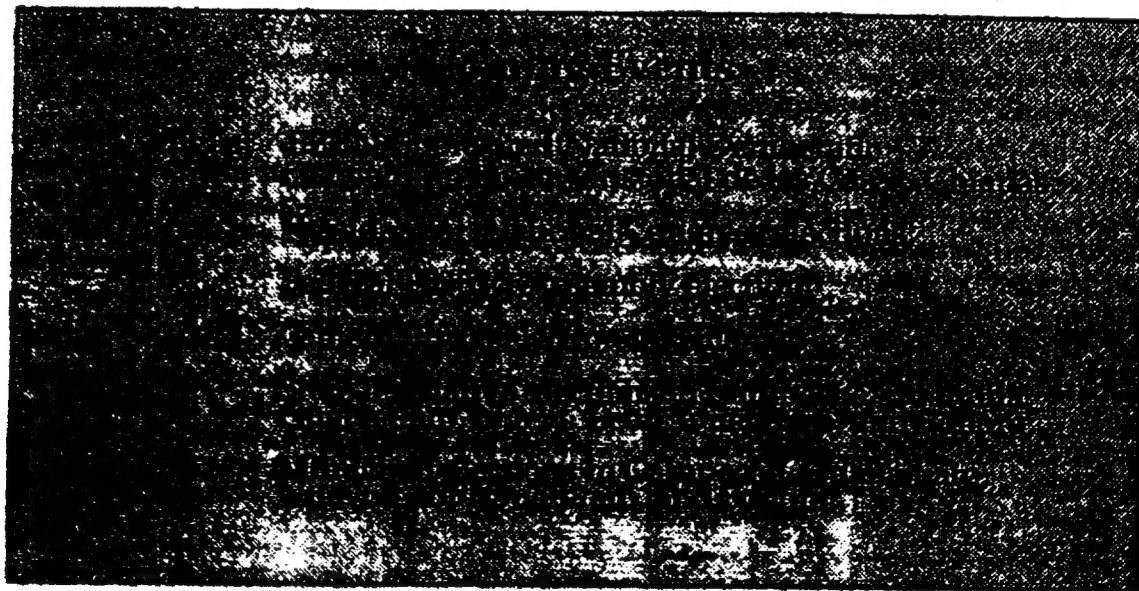
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early July. In Guerrero, a group known as the Southern Liberation Army (ELS) has been recruiting members in isolated towns and may have adopted EZLN-like tactics and strategies. For example, the group recently raided several ranches and stole 400 head of cattle, according to press reports. In addition, a group of 25 state judicial policemen were ambushed in the town of Olinala—presumably by the ELS—resulting in the death of one policeman and prompting state authorities to seek Army assistance in combing the area for possible hideouts. In Oaxaca, a state judicial policeman was killed and several others injured in an ambush by unknown parties.

these organizations are more readily resorting to violence, and the number of individuals thought to be participating has increased over the last few months.

PRI candidate Zedillo,

announced a 10-point national security plan in a speech in violence-ravaged Guadalajara last month. The plan emphasizes coordinating the activities of various branches of the police, launching a national crime-prevention campaign, reinforcing the independence of the judiciary branch, and controlling the abuse of power by officials. According to press reports, the outline was well received.



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